

ABSTRACT

A method of preparing phytosterols from tall oil pitch containing steryl esters comprises the steps of converting the steryl esters to free phytosterols while in the pitch to produce a modified pitch containing the free phytosterols; removing light ends from the
5 modified pitch by evaporation to produce a bottom fraction containing the free phytosterols; evaporating the bottom fraction to produce a light phase distillate containing the free phytosterols; dissolving the light phase distillate in a solvent comprising an alcohol to produce a solution containing the free phytosterols; cooling the solution to produce a slurry with the free phytosterols crystallized in the slurry; and, washing and
10 filtering the slurry to isolate the crystallized phytosterols.